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New York

President:	Mr. Sallah	(Gambia)
Members:	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Amorim
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mr. Amolo
	Portugal	Mr. Soares
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 1152 (1998) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic (S/1998/148 and Add.1)

98-85160 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 1152 (1998) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic (S/1998/148 and Add.1)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Central African Republic and the Sudan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Deinde-Fernandez (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Erwa (Sudan) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 1152 (1998) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic, documents S/1998/148 and addendum 1. Members of the Council also have before them document S/1998/268, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Central African Republic, on whom I now call.

Mr. Deinde-Fernandez (Central African Republic): This being the first time that I have had the opportunity to speak before the Security Council since you, Sir, assumed the presidency of the Council, permit me to take this opportunity to extend to you my Government's congratulations, while at the same time expressing our appreciation for the great task performed so well by your predecessor.

Today is a great day for us in the Central African Republic. We are very cognizant of the fact that the Council has not approved any peacekeeping operation anywhere in the continent of Africa for some time now.

My Government would like to express our deep gratitude to the international community for this great moment. We would like to thank the Secretary-General and all those in the Secretariat whose effort made this possible. We would like to thank the Council for its indulgence, patience and tolerance in giving us the time to accomplish all that was necessary to make this possible. We would like to openly express our gratitude to the French Government for its continued support, a support that is most vital for the success of this operation.

I should like to reiterate my Government's determination to cooperate fully with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) in every way possible to ensure the success of its mission and to fulfil all our commitments according to the letters of my President to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council and our obligations under the agreement of MISAB. My Government is fully determined that peace, once established, will be monitored and the process of free and fair elections will be safeguarded.

Members of the Council, my Government thanks you, my people thank you, and I thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of the Central African Republic for the kind words he addressed to me.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): I have the honour to make the following statement on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country member of the European Economic Area Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the significant steps which have been made towards stabilization in the Central African Republic following the breakdown of security and civil order in 1996. The signing of the Bangui Agreements represented a major breakthrough in this process, and we pay tribute to the key role of regional leaders; the International Mediation Committee, under President Bongo of Gabon; and the International Monitoring Committee in this regard.

The European Union also congratulates the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) on the vital contribution it has made to the improvement in the security situation in the Central African Republic over the past year. The rapid and effective deployment of this mission in 1997 is an important example of a regional response to regional problems and demonstrates the professionalism and capabilities of African peacekeepers. Thus the operation conducted by MISAB was approved and authorized by the Security Council during the course of last year. In this context, we commend the contributions of those African countries that have provided troops to MISAB and the substantial commitment of one member State of the European Union, France, in support. We welcome the continued commitment of these countries to participate in and support, together with others, the new United Nations operation, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), which will shortly take over from MISAB. We applaud this new expression of United Nations readiness to act in the peacekeeping field.

The European Union recognizes that while important progress has been made in implementing the provisions of the Bangui Agreements and towards reform in the social, economic, electoral and security spheres, there remain many important tasks ahead. In this context we note with satisfaction President Patassé's commitments to further reform measures in these areas and to the successful holding of a National Reconciliation Conference in Bangui in March. We look forward to continued progress leading to the holding of free and fair elections later this year.

The European Union warmly welcomes the establishment of MINURCA to replace MISAB from mid-April. We recognize that its security, training, disarmament and electoral assistance responsibilities will play a key role in the period leading up to elections. We also welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative in the Central African Republic, and fully support the coordination and cooperation roles assigned to him, in particular his responsibilities for encouraging assistance from the international community to the Central African Republic.

In this respect, the European Union will continue to provide development assistance, especially under the European Development Fund. This will include substantial support for the rehabilitation of the transport sector and assistance to the health sector.

The European Union shares the concerns which have been expressed over the fragility of the situation in the Central African Republic. There are many challenges ahead facing its Government and people which will need to be met in order to consolidate the progress made over the past year. The European Union believes the United Nations, through MINURCA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, can make a significant contribution to meeting those challenges and help build lasting peace, democracy and development in the Central African Republic.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to extend to you once again our congratulations on presiding over the Council. I should like also to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency the Ambassador of Gabon on his presidency of the Council.

The Sudan, thanks to the close neighbourly ties of kinship and regional integration that characterize our relationship with our sisterly neighbour the Central African Republic, had the honour to participate — represented by the President of the Republic — in the signing of the historic reconciliation pact in the Central African Republic. This pact has proved once again that Africans can shoulder their responsibilities and solve their problems peacefully.

This pact provides a good example of the African continent's longstanding tradition of patiently and wisely settling disputes through tolerance, forgiveness, consultation, democracy and dialogue. This has proved to the entire world that Africa has a time-honoured history and civilization as well as a promising future.

The delegation of the Sudan would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the mediation efforts of the group of Heads of State of the sisterly countries that

make up the family of one African house — the continent — efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability to the neighbourly Central African Republic.

We cannot but express our admiration for the paternal role played by His Excellency President Omar Bongo in guiding the ship to a safe haven. We would like also to pay tribute to the effective role undertaken by His Excellency President Amadou Toumani Touré, who played his role very wisely, competently and sincerely, as did the other brother Presidents in the Mediation Committee. We would also like to pay tribute to the important role of the African States that participated in the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) by establishing the pillars of peace and security in the country.

We support the draft resolution which is before the Council today on deploying international forces in the Central African Republic and salute the sincere efforts of the Secretary-General and the Council, which made possible the realization of this important achievement in the maintenance of peace and security.

We reiterate the importance of peace, stability and security in all the region so that we can realize our great objective: regional cooperation and integration and achieving development for our countries and peoples. Let us, at this historic moment in which our neighbour, the Central African Republic, enters a new era, turn the page on a recent history that was replete with wounds, sadness and wars. Let us gaze from a new vantage point upon the twenty-first century — a century in which we will have been liberated from dependency, backwardness and poverty, and in which we will step into a new world in which multilateralism, diversity, and different ethnicities and cultures will be new sources of riches and in which our differences will be transformed into conciliation, our conflicts into amity, and our altercations into a dialogue and cooperation.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Sudan reiterates the provisions of the draft resolution, with regard to the importance of the international community, represented by Governments and the various institutions, helping the Central African Republic to proceed towards the economic development to which it aspires.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Amolo (Kenya): Allow me to begin by expressing my delegation's warm appreciation for the excellent spirit of cooperation and compromise that permeated the intensive and lengthy consultations we have had on this item. The result is this draft resolution, which we believe achieves a good balance of all positions laid out during the negotiations. The draft before us today is in response to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report of 23 February 1998, which we strongly supported and commended.

In December 1996, during the Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government of France and Africa, Bangui was in the throes of a fratricidal conflict. What followed was a unique experiment with conflict management and prevention which, as is evidenced by today's meeting, has been generally successful. We say this because many of the goals set by the International Mediation Committee, the International Monitoring Committee and the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) have been accomplished.

As clearly spelt out in MISAB's third periodic report in document S/1998/86, the provisions of the Bangui Agreements relating to the formation of a government of national union, the adoption of an amnesty law covering offences in the context of the third rebellion, and the situation of former heads of State can now be regarded as having been fully implemented. Since then, the National Reconciliation Conference has taken place and a National Reconciliation Pact adopted. We believe that this is a critical step towards consolidating peace, stability, security and the future prosperity of the Central African Republic.

Meanwhile, the process of disarmament, which is still ongoing, has to a large extent been addressed. Credit for the improved political and security situation goes to the people of Central Africa, States contributing troops to MISAB and the Government of France, which had the foresight, faith and courage to continue supporting the peace process in the Central African Republic.

The stage in Bangui is now set for the home stretch. The situation, however, remains fragile and is not irreversible. The establishment of a United Nations

Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) will therefore provide the needed assurance to the people of the Central African Republic that we recognize the gains they have made, seek to assist in consolidating these gains and are interested in their future stability. At the same time, the appointment of a Special Representative, who, among other things, will provide good offices and mediation between the Government and political parties, will boost confidence in the process of national reconciliation and help in the coordination of the United Nations post-conflict peace-building effort. It is our hope that the establishment of MINURCA at this point in the peace process confirms the international community's engagement in the Central African Republic and will assist in ushering in an era of national reconciliation, democracy and reconstruction.

In the same vein, it is important and noteworthy that the draft resolution clearly recognizes that, for long-term peace and stability in the Central African Republic, a sustained commitment by the international community in support of economic, social and institutional development is indispensable, and in this regard we welcome the progress achieved in discussions with international financial institutions and urge our development partners to provide the necessary support. It is also important that we all contribute to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General.

In his letter to the Secretary-General of 8 January 1998, His Excellency President Ange-Félix Patassé expressed his Government's solid commitment to continuing to carry out political, security and economic reforms. We expect that the implementation of these reforms will be accomplished rapidly within a definite time-frame. This, of course, includes strict adherence to the election timetable that has been set, as well as recognizing the need to prioritize the promulgation of an electoral code. We are greatly encouraged that President Patassé yesterday issued a decree, No. 98, establishing a committee to follow up on the National Reconciliation Pact, in accordance with article 7 of that Pact.

The Secretary-General recommended that MINURCA be established for a limited period and that its mandate end 90 days after the announcement of the election results. We believe that this is enough time to lay a solid foundation for the Central African Republic's renaissance. A new dependency on United Nations peacekeeping operations to hold our countries together is not one that we would cherish or want to see nurtured.

Kenya will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): In January 1997, thanks to African mediation led by the President of Gabon, El Hadj Omar Bongo, the Bangui Agreements were signed. These Agreements put an end to the turmoil which had swept the Central African Republic in 1996 and laid the foundation for national reconciliation. So that the Agreements would not be a dead letter, six African countries, with the approval of all parties in the Central African Republic and the support of France, deployed the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). This force was entrusted with ensuring security in Bangui and supervising the collection of weapons that had been dispersed during the three rebellions of 1996. This presence in the field was supplemented by the continued and effective action of the International Follow-up Committee, presided over by General Touré, former President of the Republic of Mali, which was mandated at the political level with following up and assisting in the implementation of the Bangui Agreements.

In August 1997, the Security Council endorsed the conduct of operations performed by MISAB. On three occasions since, it has extended that endorsement as an expression of its appreciation of MISAB's work. After 14 months, MISAB had, in everyone's opinion, done tremendous work. Today, it has almost completed its mandate. Calm reigns in Bangui and the greater share of weapons has been recovered. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, "significant progress has been made" [*S/1998/148, para. 15*] in the political and economic spheres and in security.

However, according to the Secretary-General,

> "much remains to be done to ensure a lasting peace in the Central African Republic". [*ibid., para. 16*]

The situation is not yet irreversible. That is why the intervention of the United Nations will make it possible to maintain security and stability in Bangui and to consolidate the progress achieved by MISAB and the International Follow-up Committee. The mandate which the Security Council is entrusting to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) and to the Secretary-General's Special Representative, who will lead it, is an appropriate response to this need. This mandate goes beyond MISAB's capabilities. It involves continuing to monitor and promote the implementation of reforms and of commitments made by the Central African authorities, including those related to

the country's economic recovery. It involves contributing to ensuring security and stability in Bangui, strengthening the capacity of the Central African police force to maintain order, assisting in the preparation of legislative elections scheduled for August/September 1998 and, finally, encouraging and coordinating the action of United Nations agencies and programmes. The achievement of these objectives well justifies recourse to the competence and authority of a United Nations operation headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The draft resolution to be adopted by the Council, the initiative for which came from the African members of the Council, particularly Kenya, defines an initial mandate of three months. This mandate could be extended if it appears that the efforts made by the United Nations are met by the efforts the Central African authorities will have to make in order to fully implement the Bangui Agreements and the National Reconciliation Pact and to undertake the necessary reforms to improve the political, economic, financial and social situation of the country. The authorities of the Central African Republic have already made a commitment in that regard, as was stated by the representative of Kenya, and we welcome this.

At a time when the Secretary-General is preparing to submit his report on Africa requested by the Security Council in a ministerial meeting in September 1997, the establishment of MINURCA seems to us to illustrate the desire of the United Nations to maintain a presence in Africa in the service of peace and security. This United Nations operation is naturally, and as a priority, an African operation.

The six countries participating in MISAB will keep their contingents in MINURCA, and two other African States, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, will join them; I think they deserve our appreciation. This demonstrates that there is no need to distinguish between the necessary strengthening of African peacekeeping capacity, in which we are all interested, and the role of the United Nations: they complement and reinforce each other. Similarly, the legitimate commitment of African countries to the maintenance of peace in Africa does not exclude the support that States from outside the region or outside the continent can render in their desire also to contribute, in the field, to peace and stability in Africa. In this spirit, my country, for its part, will continue, as it has for more than a year in the case of MISAB, to provide logistical and medical support to MINURCA.

MINURCA, finally, is a good example of preventive diplomacy. These days — when preventive diplomacy is a subject of much debate, and quite rightly so; when it is lamented, sometimes very solemnly and emotionally that the community of nations has not intervened quickly enough in the past to quell conflicts — we should rejoice in the fact that after MISAB has done its job, MINURCA will come, in turn, to offer the Central African Republic and the subregion the opportunity to make solid and lasting their refound peace and security.

Mr. Sáenz Biolley (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): This formal meeting is of special importance and interest to Costa Rica because since our election as a member of the Security Council we had not had an opportunity to participate in the process of considering and approving a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Therefore, we are pleased to make our statement at this meeting in which the Council will approve the establishment of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA).

From the moment when the crisis in the Central African Republic became a subject for the Security Council's consideration, my delegation has consistently expressed its full support for the regional initiative and the work done by the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). Costa Rica recognizes the important work MISAB accomplished as the mechanism of conflict management and prevention that achieved normalcy in that country.

We commend and are grateful to all those who participated in that Mission, including the International Mediation Committee and the International Monitoring Committee, and we take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for regional initiatives, which, in the case of Africa, have played and continue to play a crucial role in conflict resolution. We also take this opportunity to acknowledge and highlight once again the major leadership role played by France, as well as the important efforts made by President Omar Bongo of Gabon.

This does not mean that the situation in the Central African Republic has been fully resolved or that the original causes of the crisis of the last two years have been eliminated. To the contrary, there is general agreement that fragility is the key characteristic of the current situation in that country. Indeed, the period of political and security crisis has been overcome; however, the new stage of peace-building will determine the

sustainability of the achievements attained. This presupposes, of course, the continuity of the international presence in the Central African Republic and the maintenance of international cooperation for the economic and social reconstruction of the country.

In this connection, my delegation supports the concept of multifunctional operations and is pleased that MINURCA will be added to the list of such missions. The Mission we propose to approve today will serve as an example of United Nations activities in the area of peace-building.

In its initial mandate, MINURCA will be responsible for maintaining and improving security and stability in Bangui and its surrounding areas. This aspect, in our view, is essential to ensure that, once this condition has been met, the other work necessary for the development of the Central African Republic, such as humanitarian assistance and the work of financial institutions, can proceed uninterrupted.

My country believes that the assistance MINURCA will provide to the authorities of the Central African Republic, as set forth in its mandate, in protecting and monitoring the key installations in Bangui and the weapons retrieved during the disarmament exercise and in advising on the restructuring of the national police force and the special police forces, is of major importance. My country agrees with the Secretary-General that it is important that MINURCA be able to offer technical and political advice to electoral bodies so that legislative elections and, in the future, presidential elections, which are fundamental in all sovereign and democratic countries, can be held.

In this regard, my country recognizes and emphasizes the great importance of the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to coordinate all United Nations activities in the Central African Republic and to establish direct channels of communication with the Government of that country.

My delegation trusts that this will constitute an appropriate management and coordination body for the work of the various specialized agencies and organs of the United Nations system, in order to ensure the proper application and implementation of the measures identified by the international community to foster peace and development in the Central African Republic.

As has been stated here, the economic and social situation in the Central African Republic continues to be of particular concern and interest to us. Recent statistics show the figures to be alarming, particularly with regard to social issues. Some of them show that 75 per cent of children between the ages of 2 and 12 years are malnourished and that 65 per cent of adults live in conditions below the poverty level. Furthermore, the interruption in the functioning of public institutions and the delay in the payment of salaries to civil servants have caused many strikes, which on several occasions resulted in acts of violence and which, as we all recall, were one of the causes of the conflict.

That is why, in our firm opinion, and as we have said on several occasions, it is essential that the international financial institutions adopt a new vision and a new attitude with regard to the situation in the Central African Republic. With the support of the region and of this Council, that country is carrying out a major political peace-building effort, and we believe that this requires exceptional and comprehensive treatment by the international financial institutions, which should consider giving clear support for and participating actively in the process of reconstructing the country. Otherwise, achievements will be jeopardized and we will run the risk of losing what has been gained.

We are aware that the Central African Republic is now at a crucial stage and that the active presence of the United Nations will help the country move ahead and become again an active member of the international community. That is why my delegation will support the draft resolution before us, which is an essential instrument for the achievement of these objectives.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Persistent signs of instability in the Central African Republic led a group of African nations to bring the situation in that country to the attention of the Security Council. A multinational force had been put together by these countries, with the participation of France, to prevent the internal turbulence from further threatening peace and security in a region already vulnerable to conflict. While the force deployed as of January 1997 appears to have effectively contributed to curbing unrest, an international peacekeeping presence in the country seems to be required so that progress achieved so far is not jeopardized.

We are now extending for a final period the authorization for the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) to remain in place up to 15 April. We would like to take

this opportunity to commend the valuable work performed by MISAB, which placed the Council in a position to take a decision that we are about to formalize. I would also like to praise the role played by President Bongo of Gabon in ensuring the coordinated efforts of the countries of the region in the context of the International Mediation Committee.

Indeed, there have been positive signs. The political forces recently signed a National Reconciliation Pact, which can be considered an encouraging step towards the stabilization of the country. However, the situation remains fragile. In order to consolidate an environment required for the holding of free and fair elections, a special security and political mechanism has been set up. It will be crucial to ensure that, during the period leading up to the elections, conditions are not allowed to deteriorate. The Security Council should follow events closely in the coming weeks and months.

The draft resolution that we are considering proposes the establishment of a peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). Assurances given by President Patassé to the effect that he will facilitate national reconciliation were an important element in allowing for the establishment of this Mission, and the international community will be justified in expecting him to fully honour his commitment.

MINURCA is the first full-fledged peacekeeping operation authorized by the Security Council in more than two years. This is something to be reflected upon, especially as this lull did not coincide with a period of fewer conflicts, particularly in Africa. A forthcoming report by the Secretary-General should permit the Council to come forward with a clearer and more constructive agenda for Africa on the basis of a balanced assessment of recent experiences.

The draft before us represents a satisfactory outcome from the point of view of my delegation. We are glad that participants in the negotiations leading to it were capable of ironing out differences, allowing for the operation to be launched in an effective way. MINURCA will operate under the explicit consent of the parties, which places it in the corresponding legal framework under the Charter. Paragraph 13 of the draft resolution (S/1998/268) affirms that

> "MINURCA may be required to take action to ensure security and freedom of movement of its personnel in the discharge of its mandate".

In our understanding, this rule should apply generally to peacekeeping operations under Chapter VI.

Apart from its security component, MINURCA has been entrusted with other tasks linked to the mandate attributed to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who will assist in the promotion of the reforms necessary to achieve national reconciliation and stability and provide good offices and mediation between the Government and political parties.

The initial mandate of MINURCA also includes provisions for advice and technical support to the national electoral bodies regarding the electoral code and plans for the conduct of the legislative elections scheduled for August/September 1998.

The Council's decision to establish a peacekeeping operation for the Central African Republic is a meaningful contribution by the international community and cannot be taken lightly, given the prevailing budgetary restraints under which the Organization has been operating. We urge President Patassé and the parties involved to make the best of this opportunity to ensure lasting peace in the Central African Republic, thereby contributing to greater harmony in the entire region.

Mr. Soares (Portugal): At the outset, I would like to say that Portugal concurs fully with the statement made earlier by the European Union presidency.

The establishment of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) is an example of the cooperation of the United Nations with an African-led initiative to promote regional peace and stability. Portugal strongly believes in such initiatives and supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the establishment of a peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic.

It must be remembered that the current situation of relative security in the Central African Republic is very much due to the tireless efforts of regional leaders. We praise the mediation efforts of President Bongo and the role of the International Monitoring Committee in the resolution of this crisis. In addition, the strong commitment of many African countries and of France to the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation

of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) was essential in promoting stability, often under difficult circumstances.

However, the continued presence of the international community is required to assist in the important tasks that remain ahead. The National Reconciliation Pact adopted by the Reconciliation Conference, which took place in Bangui earlier this month, was an important step in fostering stability in that country. We harbour great hope that the holding of free and fair elections in August/September of this year will help consolidate peace in the Central African Republic. However, the situation remains fragile, and we clearly understand that further reform is required.

In this context, my delegation is pleased to see the establishment of MINURCA, starting next April. We see it as a clear example of the willingness of the international community to cooperate closely with regional efforts in Africa. Indeed, MINURCA is a peacekeeping force with a mandate tailor-made to the requirements of the situation in the Central African Republic. In particular, we would like to stress MINURCA's future role in maintaining and enhancing security and stability. Let me also underline that its mandate will include supporting the national security forces in matters of law and order, assisting in coordination with other international efforts in a short-term police trainers programme and providing advice and technical support to the national electoral bodies.

We also welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Representative in the Central African Republic. As head of MINURCA, with overall authority with regard to United Nations activities in that country, the Special Representative can play a crucial role in the stabilization of the present situation. Moreover, we attach importance to action by the Special Representative to encourage the provision of assistance by United Nations agencies and programmes in the areas of development and economic recovery.

Portugal has always been firm in its support for the creation of a peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic. We see this operation as a meaningful step on the part of the international community to promote peace and stability in the Central African Republic. Therefore, we will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us today.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden): The decision we are about to take, to establish a multifunctional United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic, is an important step for the country, for the region and for the United Nations. It will give the Central African Republic much-needed international political and security support in the crucial process to elections that lies ahead. Partly through the commendable efforts of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), conditions in the country have improved. But the security situation remains fragile.

The presence of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) will play a significant role in building security and in strengthening democracy and the rule of law in the Central African Republic. It will also, indirectly, have an important stabilizing effect in the region. The regional security is precarious, and any deterioration of the situation in the Central African Republic could have perilous consequences. It is noteworthy that MINURCA will be the first entirely new United Nations peace operation in more than three years. The establishment of MINURCA will demonstrate the determination of the United Nations and of the Security Council to assume their responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security in Africa, as well as elsewhere. It is, indeed, fundamental that the Security Council should be ready to decide on actions throughout the spectrum of conflict resolution: from early warning, prevention, mediation and other such instruments to peacekeeping and, if need be, enforcement.

The United Nations presence in the Central African Republic — the Special Representative and MINURCA — will be multifunctional. This is an important result of thorough discussions among the members of the Security Council: one which Sweden very much welcomes.

We are looking forward to the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, who has been given a strong political mandate within MINURCA as well as a key coordinating role for the United Nations in the Central African Republic.

The success of MINURCA will depend on the continued cooperation of all parties in the Central African Republic. President Patassé and his Government have so far made considerable progress in fulfilling their commitments to economic, social, security and electoral reform, as expressed in the letter dated 8 January 1998 from President Patassé addressed to the Secretary-General. In this context, we note with satisfaction that a National Reconciliation Conference will take place later this month. Much remains to be done, however, to implement outstanding reform measures.

In conclusion, may I express Sweden's gratitude to the States that participated in MISAB and to France for their contributions to peace and stability in the Central African Republic. The task of MINURCA will be to build upon the success of MISAB.

Let me also add that Sweden fully concurs with the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): At the outset, let me express on behalf of the delegation of Japan my sincere appreciation to all those involved in efforts to maintain stability in the Central African Republic. I would like to pay particular tribute to those who took part in the activities of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), the International Monitoring Committee, and the International Mediation Committee, as well as France, which provided much-needed support for those activities. My delegation believes that these efforts have been key in maintaining order in the country, and thereby in preventing the destabilization of the subregion.

Although significant progress has been achieved thus far, including the adoption yesterday of the electoral code, national reconciliation in the Central African Republic remains a difficult and complex process. Among the tasks awaiting the people of that country are the holding of legislative elections, the restructuring and capacity-building of the security forces, and the introduction of financial and economic reforms.

These tasks are indeed challenging, and will require concrete assistance from the international community to ensure that the necessary conditions of peace and stability prevail throughout the country. My delegation therefore supports the establishment of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), and will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us. The establishment of MINURCA will demonstrate to the world the ongoing commitment and unique capabilities of the United Nations, and particularly of the Security Council, with regard to the maintenance of world peace and security.

In this context, Japan has been and will continue to be engaged in the effort to devise a comprehensive and effective strategy for the prevention and early resolution of conflicts, with a particular focus on Africa at this stage. In January this year, for example, Japan hosted the Tokyo International Conference on Preventive Strategy, where representatives from more than 20 countries and organizations met and discussed the subject in depth. Among the main elements of this strategy are an enhanced early-warning capability for the United Nations, and greater coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity. In effect, Japan is exploring how the role played by the Security Council and the United Nations in conflict prevention can be strengthened and rendered more effective.

I feel obliged to reiterate that MINURCA must by no means be viewed as a panacea for the problems confronting the Central African Republic. Its mission is simply to support the efforts of the Government to overcome those problems. It is the responsibility of the Central African Republic itself to rebuild the country and to strive to achieve prosperity. In this regard, I would like to stress that it is incumbent upon President Patassé, as the head of the Administration, to fulfil the commitments he has made to the people of the Central African Republic.

Finally, I would like to restate that Japan, for its part, will continue to assist the Central African Republic in its efforts to maintain stability and to enhance the well-being of its people.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Ever since the Security Council adopted its resolution 1125 (1997) last August, the Bangui Agreements have been implemented comprehensively and effectively, thanks to the efforts and cooperation of the Government of the Central African Republic and the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). The situation in the country has been reasonably stable, and there have been tangible results in the process of national reconciliation. China is pleased by this.

At the invitation of the Government of the Central African Republic, MISAB carried out peacekeeping activities under a Security Council mandate to monitor and assist that country in implementing the Bangui Agreements. The officers and men of MISAB have done their duty in most difficult circumstances: recovering weapons, promoting dialogue, maintaining security and providing humanitarian services. Their excellent performance has created conditions in which the country can stabilize the situation and achieve national reconciliation. China highly appreciates the work of MISAB, which has shown once again that through efforts by African countries themselves, and with full and timely

support by the Security Council, the stability and development of the countries involved can be gradually secured.

China has always maintained and supported the view that the Council should pay attention to the problems faced by Africa. In resolving these problems, the reasonable demands of the African countries should be respected and the necessary support rendered.

The draft resolution before us will authorize the establishment of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) to replace MISAB, so as to help the Government and the people of that country realize their ultimate goal of national reconciliation.

The Chinese Government supports this operation. For us, the draft resolution before us is a rather good document. On the one hand, it has accommodated the specific requests of that country and of other African countries. On the other hand, it has made reasonable and proper provisions for the mandate, functions and time-frame for MINURCA.

We believe that MINURCA will follow the good practices of MISAB, will fully respect the Government of the Central African Republic, will, responding to the specific situation in the country, continue to promote communications and dialogue among all sides and will accomplish the tasks set forth in the draft resolution.

A journey of 1,000 miles starts with the first step. The country has already taken its first step on the road towards national reconciliation and the restoration of the national economy. Basically, the stability and the progress of the country depend on its people and its Government. We hope that the adoption of this draft resolution will actively promote national reconciliation and economic reconstruction and help the country move gradually towards peace, stability, development and prosperity.

For these reasons, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and detailed report contained in document S/1998/148. I should also like to thank the States participating in the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), as well as the Government of France, the International Mediation Committee, the International Monitoring Committee and United Nations programmes and agencies for their significant efforts to achieve national reconciliation and stability in the Central African Republic.

My delegation shares the concern of the Secretary-General regarding the fragile political and security situation in that country, particularly because light arms remain in circulation and are obtainable from certain countries. This situation is also due to the fact that some elements of the former armed forces have fled to the south of the country, and also to the presence of local militias to the north. This makes it essential for the international community, as represented by the United Nations, to be present in the Central African Republic in order to restore stability and security in the country.

Proceeding from the State of Bahrain's concern to support security and stability in the Central African Republic in particular, and in the region as a whole, as well as our concern to see a United Nations presence in that country, my delegation will support the draft resolution before us, which pertains to the creation of a United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). In this context, my delegation calls on all parties to ensure the security, safety and freedom of movement of the members of the Mission and the protection of the Mission's property.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Slovenia supports the draft resolution submitted to the Security Council for action today. It is a timely and necessary draft resolution in this period when decisive action is needed to normalize the situation in the Central African Republic. We would like to commend the delegation of Kenya for the excellent work done in preparing the draft.

We welcome the progress made so far in the efforts to achieve national reconciliation and sustainable stability in the Central African Republic. In particular, we welcome the commitment and the efforts of the Member States participating in the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). We also welcome the neutral and impartial way in which they are supporting the improvement of the security situation in the country.

On the other hand, we realize that the situation in the Central African Republic remains fragile and that it continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region and therefore calls for further efforts on the part of the international community.

We believe that all the signatories to the Bangui Agreements and the authorities of the Central African Republic need an appropriate security environment in order to take steps to implement political, economic, social and security reforms, including the establishment of an electoral code, preparation for the legislative elections of this year and implementation of the National Reconciliation Pact. The secure and stable environment that is being created will remain essential, and the assistance and support of the international community will therefore continue to be necessary.

Therefore, Slovenia will vote in favour of the present draft resolution, by which Security Council would decide to authorize the extension of MISAB's mandate until 15 April 1998 and to establish a United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) with effect from 15 April 1998 for an initial period of three months.

Slovenia is encouraged by the ability of the Security Council to act today. The members' grasp of the issues at hand and the degree of unity among them will undoubtedly aid in the success of MINURCA.

Mr. Fedotov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): We are pleased to note that progress has been achieved in normalizing the situation in the Central African Republic. To a significant extent this is due to the vigorous work of the International Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the Bangui Agreements and of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB).

At the same time, it remains necessary to continue international assistance for the consolidation of the process of national reconciliation in that African country and to maintain a secure environment conducive to the holding of free and fair elections. An important factor in establishing long-term peace and stability is finding a speedy and effective solution to economic and social problems. Success in this area is possible only through the united efforts of all political forces in the Central African Republic.

The effectiveness of the international community's assistance in achieving a definitive resolution of the crisis in that country depends on the readiness of its Government and all parties in the Central African Republic to demonstrate further political will, implement strictly the Bangui Agreements and comply strictly with the National Reconciliation Pact. We consider as optimum the initial mandate for the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), as defined in the present draft resolution, as well as the strength of its military component. Our understanding is that its full deployment will be completed by 15 April so as to ensure an orderly transition from MISAB to MINURCA. The question of the future role of the United Nations in fostering national reconciliation, and in particular in preparations for holding elections, can be decided later in the light of developments and on the basis of the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General, which will be submitted by 20 June 1998.

For all these reasons, the delegation of the Russian Federation will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): We are pleased to support a limited but essential peacekeeping mission for the Central African Republic. The Council's actions today will help consolidate the work of the multinational force, which we commend for restoring order to Bangui and initiating an efficient disarmament programme. The international community owes its gratitude to the African nations that have participated and to the Government of France for its support of this mission. We welcome the continuing support of this mission's sponsors through personnel, equipment and voluntary contributions to the United Nations peacekeeping operation — the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) — as the transfer from one command to the other takes place.

The role of this mission, as outlined in this draft resolution, is to provide security long enough for the Government of the Central African Republic to undertake the reforms it has promised and to provide its own security. This mission is designed as a temporary bridge to give the Central African Republic time to re-establish a secure State under good governance.

In Council discussions of this mission, we all agreed that the United Nations will not assume responsibility for security in the Central African Republic indefinitely. The Government must use the opportunity that this mission provides wisely and well. We have seen more progress by the Government of the Central African Republic in the last several weeks, as the threat of MISAB's departure loomed, than in the previous year. That progress towards reform must continue — progress towards regular and complete payment of military and civilian salaries, towards national reconciliation and towards military restructuring that will ensure the security and stability of the country.

We strongly support the initiatives of the Bretton Woods institutions to assist the Central African Republic's progress towards financial security, and we will review the reports of those institutions as a measure of the Government's dedication to serious economic reform.

We welcome a three-month initial mandate for this mission. This will allow the Council to review progress made and adjust the mandate of the mission as necessary in July. If the Government of the Central African Republic does not make concrete progress towards the necessary economic, political and security reforms, we will find it difficult to renew this mission for another period.

The role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is critical for this transitional period in the Central African Republic. We look forward to the Secretary-General's prompt appointment of a strong Representative. As this draft resolution stipulates, the Representative will be in charge of this mission but will also assist the Government with its reform efforts and oversee all the United Nations activities in the Central African Republic. The coordination of United Nations assistance programmes with other international efforts — including those of the Bretton Woods institutions and other multilateral and bilateral donors — is essential for the ultimate success of this assistance. This mission will provide the strategic elements of security and a carefully targeted civilian police training programme to enable the Government to take over its own security.

Elections are another important part of the Central African Republic's democratic reform process. We welcome the news that Parliament has passed the electoral code and hope that firm dates for legislative elections will be announced shortly. We hope also that election experts, from agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or international non-governmental organizations experienced in election planning, will provide assistance to the Central African Republic. We welcome the participation of the Representative of the Secretary-General in coordinating potential international assistance for the elections, and look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations to the Council in June. We do not think that election assistance is best placed under the military command of the peacekeeping operation but rather should form a separate building-block of the broad programme of assistance that the Secretary-General will coordinate with support from other organizations.

The United States also supports the formation of a "Friends of the Central African Republic" group to help coordinate international economic assistance for this country and to advise the nation as well. No one nation can do alone what the international community can accomplish by working together and pooling resources.

Finally, I should like to emphasize American support for this African solution to an African problem. We see United Nations involvement in this peacekeeping mission as supporting and extending a regional initiative to help a neighbour. We hope and expect that this mission, and other programmes such as election assistance, will reinforce the Central African Republic's own efforts to enable the re-establishment of a stable and secure Government.

The President: I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1998/268.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bahrain, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, France, Gabon, Gambia, Japan, Kenya, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1159 (1998).

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, whose recommendations to establish a peacekeeping operation to take over from the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) have had a strong impact on the decision that the Security Council has just taken.

It is appropriate to recall that the turmoil that has endangered peace and security in the Central African Republic has been considerably diminished thanks to the Bangui Agreements of January 1997 and the establishment of an inter-African force to monitor such agreements. I should therefore like to commend the efforts of MISAB as well as those of all the protagonists who have taken part in the quest for a negotiated solution

to the Central African crisis, particularly the International Mediation Committee and France.

By authorizing, through the resolution just adopted, the deployment of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), the Council has demonstrated its clear intention to continue the efforts of the international community definitively to resolve this crisis. In this connection, we welcome the spirit of cooperation that has prevailed throughout the negotiations, making it possible to produce the consensus text that we have just adopted. It goes without saying that this result could not have been obtained without the cooperation of the Central African authorities, the parties concerned and the Central African people as a whole, who have thus shown that they are truly imbued with the common desire to achieve national reconciliation and to establish lasting stability. This desire was reflected, *inter alia*, in the recent signing of the reconciliation pact between all segments of the Central African population.

Having said that, the relative climate of peace and security that prevails in the country today needs to be further strengthened.

To that end, my country fully supports the objectives assigned to MINURCA to strengthen the national reconciliation process, strictly within the framework of the Bangui Agreements, and to establish the conditions necessary for the future legislative elections in a climate of transparency and with the close cooperation of MINURCA with regional initiatives, notably those of the International Mediation Committee, the International Follow-up Committee and the Organization of African Unity.

We are convinced that MINURCA will play a key role in the implementation of the provisions of the National Reconciliation Pact to achieve a lasting peace and to launch real economic development.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Gambia.

My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the Central African Republic, contained in document S/1998/148, which apprised us of the recent developments in the Central African Republic. We are encouraged to note that significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Bangui Agreements. We are more particularly encouraged by the commitment shown by President Patassé to implement the reforms necessary for the full implementation of the Agreements.

Although the security situation in the Central African Republic has improved steadily, it is still a cause for concern. My delegation would like to congratulate the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) for the role it has played in restoring calm and normalcy in the Central African Republic. The security situation is, however, still precarious and the mandate of MISAB will soon end.

In the light of these two facts, it is imperative that some intervention be made in order to consolidate and build upon the gains already made by MISAB. The intervention required would therefore be a United Nations peacekeeping mission to the Central African Republic. The resolution we have just adopted establishes the necessary intervention, that is, a peacekeeping mission.

From the report of the Secretary-General, we have learned that substantial economic and financial reforms need to be undertaken urgently. Otherwise, the present negative socio-economic conditions in the country are likely to continue seriously to undermine the overall security and stability in the country. Due to this fact, my delegation found it fitting that the resolution calls on States to contribute to the Trust Fund for the Central African Republic and also on international organizations and financial institutions to assist in post-conflict development in the Central African Republic.

Central to the peacekeeping operation is the request made to Member States to contribute personnel, equipment and other resources to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). These provisions are very important to my delegation, and we hope that States and international organizations will respond positively.

One other important provision is the request made to the Secretary-General to report on the progress made by the Government of the Central African Republic in adopting an electoral code and developing plans for the legislative elections. It is the view of my delegation that such a provision puts some pressure on the Government of the Central African Republic to act.

On balance, my delegation believes that this resolution goes in the right direction. We have joined the consensus with the other delegations in support of it.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.